846 Next to her the child lies in a kadong (Indochinese van). Between the mattress and the kadong lies a dagger if it is a boy, a needle with some sewing thread if it is a girl, so that later the child may become a strong and brave man or a woman skilled in domestic arts.

[844] The accoucheur, who is also a sorcerer, hangs on the roof a fishnet which reaches the ground and must completely cover the bed of the woman and the kadong of the newborn child. An incantation is recited intended to protect the mother and child from the Phi Phai, the souls of women who have died in childbirth or while pregnant, and which take the form of a night bird. The sorcerer stretches a white cotton thread around the bed and the hearth which will act as a barrier to the Phi Phai, and which also has the property of preventing the mother and child from having attacks of nausea [les bourbouilles].

846 In addition to the very frequent affusions and sitz baths, the woman takes every day two or three aromatic vapor baths. Her meals taken
262 inside the fishnet consist of rice, grilled chicken or pork seasoned with grilled salt and mixed with houa kha (a kind of gingerbread). She may drink only [55] hot decoctions of the root of a wild vine which has diuretic properties.

846 During the You Kam people take turns day and night helping the family watch over the mother and child. In order to keep awake
[527] they read aloud, make music, sing or play. This is the custom of the vigil, the ngan which takes place whenever there is a feast or any other event.

The You Kam finishes at the end of eight days in Lower Laos, but lasts more than twenty days in the north.

Churching of Women. A day of ceremony is chosen for the woman who is leaving her childbed (ok Kam). This ok kam always takes place in the morning. The woman takes her bath in the river, while all the accessories which have served for the kam are removed. When she returns to the house, she attends the ceremony of the Sou Khouan. After this she takes up her normal life again, although she is obliged to abstain from certain foods which are liable to bring on post partum hemorrhages. When the mother and child are in good health, these alimentary precautions are relaxed fairly soon, and by the end of the second month many of these rules
[853] are broken. Laotian mothers are in the habit of giving their children, as soon as the ok kam is performed, chewed rice, seasoned with salt, wrapped in a banana leaf and warmed on hot ashes. The newborn usually stand this diet fairly well.